THE NEW YORK HERALD
MAGAZINE and BOOKS

SECTION SEVEN. NEW YORK, SUNDAY, AUGUST 6, 1922. TWENTY-FOUR PAGES.

QUEENS AND BULLS AND VOLCANOES

By EDWARD W. TOWNSEND.

SINCE that sprightly member of Parliament, Lady Astor, has licensed for polite usage the phrase "You said a mouthful," I feel at liberty to apply it to the geologist who without qualification said of Kilauea, "It is the largest active volcano in the world." This gave snap and importance to our plan to take steamer from Honolulu, which is on the island of Oahu, to visit the Kilauea crater on the big island of Hawaii.

The night before we sailed Dowager Queen Emma, wife of the late King Lunalilo, gave a native entertainment for Mr. McFarlane and his guests, of whom I was one. Feminine high caste society—castes in those days were as strictly observed there as in India—was divided into two groups; those who favored the politics of Queen Emma; those who followed the politics of Princess Liliuokalani. A third interesting woman in Honolulu political life was Chiefess Ruth, Governor of the island of Hawaii, and politically a partisan of the Princess. There may have been, therefore, a bit of deviltry in the impulse which prompted Queen Emma to tell us the story of Governor Ruth's wonderful feat in stopping the lava flow which so nearly destroyed the town of Hilo the previous year.

But first, something must be told of that renowned lady, Ruth. She was a rich, middle aged maiden with no radical, not even progressive, nonsense about her. Her native language was good enough for her, and she countenanced no English or French. They might do for Queen Emma, who spoke perfect English and dressed perfect Parisian. Ruth's Toryism had fallen before Yankee blandishment only once. A New England missionary had persuaded her that for one of her high state and great wealth to live in a home formed only of four posts, a roof and a floor, no matter how rich the wood, how solid the construction, was, in a way of speaking, to live no better than the wicked. So Ruth commissioned the missionary to provide her with a New England dwelling. He did. It came in a ship from Boston, every piece, from door sills to the ridge pole of its mansard roof, fitted before shipment, and with it furniture and carpets. You can see such dwellings in New England villages to-day, occupied by the quality, too. The house was put together on Ruth's park, finished, furnished spick and span, the beds made up.

Reluctantly, in fear and suspicion, Ruth allowed her maids to lead her to her bedroom. She considered the bed, cautiously, then gave thought to her own two hundred and fifty pounds of solid flesh, dismissed the maids—and slept peacefully on a rug on the bedroom floor. She never entered the house again, but was proud to have her retainers show the triumph of architecture to visitors.

Very well. Queen Emma said to us: "You must be sure to see where the dreadful lava flow from Mauna Loa was stopped by Governor Ruth at the very edge of Hilo. It was quite remarkable. Her adoring people in Hilo became frightened and sent for their Governor to come to their aid. To be sure, she ought to live there, for she draws a salary as Governor; but Hilo is not so gay a place as Honolulu. So Ruth prepared to go. Need I say to you, gentlemen, that it did not take that capable lady more than a few weeks to get ready? She was accompanied only by a dozen of her dancing girls, part of the army, and the Royal Band, and they traveled simply on a special steamer. Your friend Mr. McFarlane, the Chamberlain, went along, of course, to see that things were properly done.

"As dear Ruth stepped into the cart the donkey was lifted off its feet and held between the shafts."

"They found that the mouth of the lava river was a half mile back from Hilo landing, quite out at the edge of town, but not a carriage there to convey Ruth to the scene of her triumph over nature. But Mr. McFarlane — an incomparable man! — hastily commandeered a two wheel donkey cart carrying sugar cane, arranged steps at its back, and handed Ruth up the steps and into the cart. But what, gentlemen? As dear Ruth stepped into the cart the donkey was lifted off its feet and held by the harness between the shafts kicking and braying in dismal protest. Then the army, ever ready in an emergency, I assure you, gentlemen, pulled the distracted donkey down to earth and held it there while the cart and its precious burden, preceded by the band, followed by the dancing girls and merry villagers, was pushed to the edge of the flow, to the verge of that river of lava."

"And did Governor Ruth stop the flow?" one listener gasped.

"Of a truth, gentlemen!" the Queen responded. "She is a dauntless person; a Chiefess and daughter of Chiefs. It is my belief that she had but to rebuke the offending river by potent incantations, and perhaps a dance or two by her girls. That I think would have stopped it. It would have stopped anything. But to make sure of her triumph over nature she sacrificed in the angry, fiery flood a live pig and a bottle of gin. I have never—never, I assure you!—credited the scandalous story that the gin bottle was emptied before it was sacrificed. Never!"

On our little steamer the whites and high caste natives slept on the upper deck aft; the low caste on the lower deck forward. It was the thoughtful Queen Dowager Emma who told us that a positive preventive of seasickness was to have on deck a bountiful supper of poi, pickled fresh (uncooked) fish and champagne. "And," she warned, "if any of the supper material is overlooked be sure it is not the champagne."

After a sea voyage of two hundred miles or so we landed on the beach at Hilo, whence we made the horseback trip of twenty-five miles to Kilauea, each of us accompanied by a mounted native boy. Sailors there about have a saying that the way to find Hilo is to lay a course into the point of heaviest rain, then you're sure to fetch up in Hilo Bay. If one cares for such statistics it may be of interest to learn that the annual rainfall in those parts is 116 inches; my interest in the matter was aroused by my conviction that the whole annual fall came down while we slowly made the 4,400 foot grade. But that did not bother. There were intervals of sunshine in which we quickly dried out in a cloud of steam. Part of the way we climbed along a recent lava flow, its black brittle surface already flakey in the process of decomposition into rich soil; part of the way through forests of tree ferns, their giant fronds arching over our heads; at times through a scattering of uncultivated fruit trees. In such a place as the latter we stopped for lunch at a cluster of native huts which sheltered a settlement of three generations of two or three families. After a little observation of their ways of living I wanted to be adopted by them and let the world get along the best it could do without me; go hang, if it chose.

If not quite as revolutionary as that, at least I gained a clear understanding of the impulse which makes some of us do that very thing—revert to nature. I'd not care to climb the North Pole nor live astride the equator. But in that place! I do not know how many of the fruits of the islands grew just there, but our smiling hosts supplied us with all we wanted; not, of course, with samples of each of Hawaii's fruits; bananas, limes, oranges, lemons, pineapples, pomegranates, alligator pears, figs, peaches, loquats, guavas, strawberries, mangoes and cocoanuts. Yes, and coffee and tobacco.

The only food supply the islanders—those living apart from the civilized settlements—have to toil for is poi, their bread. This is made from taro, tato, and it must be cultivated. Cut up, it is mixed with water in a hardwood trough and pounded into a paste of desired consistency. After fermentation it is served in a calabash and conveyed to eager mouths by adept fingers. It may be, though, that after a few months' diet of poi one might long to stroll into a bright little French restaurant and consult with Louis the chef on the state of the market as to canvasback duck, sole, sweetbreads, snails, cheese and such normal foods.

The gentle reader will please imagine himself or herself 4,400 feet up the side of a mountain 14,000 feet high, in a little hotel by the shore of a lake nine miles in circumference whose surface is hundreds of feet below the surrounding banks. Think of the lake as frozen over, the ice very rough, as if it had been thaw and storm broken and then frozen hard again, all but two little open ponds which refused to freeze. Now, having fixed that picture in the mind's eye, just reverse the temperature of things; the ice is lava, too hot to be walked on except in heavy shoes; the cracks show, instead of icy water, angry red lava, and the two little unfrozen ponds are lighting the sky with volcanic fire.

That was what we found after dinner when it became dark and we prepared for a night descent into the crater of Kilauea. To be sure, night descents were prohibited—one having resulted in the death of an

Continued on Following Page.

TABLE OF CONTENTS